

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**STARK OPPOSES DEFENSE BILL**

WASHINGTON - Today, U.S. Rep. Pete Stark (D-Fremont) voted against "The Department of Defense Appropriations Bill Fiscal Year 2006," a bill appropriating funds to the Department of Defense. The bill includes funds for the war in Iraq, missile defense systems and nuclear weapons. It passed the House by a vote of 398-19.

The text of Stark's statement follows:

"Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this Defense Appropriations bill.

"I cannot support legislation that throws more money at President Bush's quagmire in Iraq without the Bush Administration providing a withdrawal date or exit strategy. Even with bipartisan Congressional calls for this timetable, President Bush still has provided no such strategy.

"The Administration also refuses to estimate the true costs of the war. The war has already cost \$208 billion, including an additional \$80.5 billion approved by Congress just this year. In fact, Congress was forced to add in another \$45.3 billion for the war in Iraq in this bill, against the President's wishes. While the funding will only cover 6 months of costs, at least my colleagues across the aisle are willing to level with the American people as to the cost of the war even if the leader of their party is not.

"As we all know, these additional funds are not helping the situation in Iraq. Insurgents continue to kill scores of American soldiers and Iraqi civilians and security forces. More than 1,700 young Americans and more than 20,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed. As long as the United States is in Iraq, the Iraqi insurgency will continue to have a justification to carry out their savage attacks on Iraqi security forces and American soldiers.

"I also oppose provisions in this bill that continue the Republican tradition of funding wasteful weapons systems. It appropriates \$7.6 billion on pie-in-the-sky Star Wars missile defense. This system has been proven to be inoperable. It seems like that the real purpose of building this system is to provide corporate welfare to defense contractors rather than to protect American lives or make the world a safer place.

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“The bill provides additional funding to build ships that the Navy has not requested and military airplanes that are unnecessary and redundant. For instance, it adds \$3.2 billion, on top of the \$40 billion already used, to build 22 F/A-22 Raptors that were justified as necessary in order to compete with a new generation of Soviet fighters. Since the collapse of the Russian air force, there is no nation that has, or is planning to have, fighter jets as dominant as the ones the U.S. Air Force currently uses in combat. The recent conflicts in Iraq, Kosovo and Afghanistan have shown the superiority of current U.S. fighters to other nation’s combat aircraft. Not only is there no need for the F/A-22, the GAO adds further rationale for its demise by reporting that its costs have ballooned to \$1.3 billion more than budgeted for by the Air Force.

“Finally, this bill wrongly encourages the development of nuclear weapons. As we fight terrorism and nuclear proliferation overseas, it is reckless to believe that more nuclear bombs at home will result in fewer bombs abroad. In fact, expanding our own nuclear capability will encourage terrorists and nations, like Iran, to build nuclear programs to match U.S. firepower, thus making them more of a threat to U.S. national security.

“I cannot in good conscience vote for a bill that encourages the proliferation of nuclear weapons, continues to place our troops in harms way with no plan to bring them home and provides billions of dollars in gifts to defense contractors. I urge my colleagues to vote down this defense bill that does nothing to keep our nation safe and, in fact, makes the world a much more dangerous place.”